

PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY IN SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI

A COMMUNITY-INFORMED STRATEGY



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Peace, security and stability in Samtskhe-Javakheti – a community-informed strategy

Introduction

This report summarises the results of a process to identify and plan for challenges to peace, security and stability in Samtskhe-Javakheti, undertaken by a group of local society representatives in 2010. It first describes challenges identified by the group, then analyses the three challenges they consider to be most important and provides recommendations for how they should be addressed. The resulting ‘strategy’ is community-informed. This means that the group of society representatives consulted with a wide group of communities at each step of the process (i.e. identification of challenges, analysis of key challenges and strategising solutions) in order to get their thoughts and perspectives. As such, this is not an ‘expert analysis’, but one grounded in the understanding and reality of people living in Samtskhe-Javakheti. We hope that this report will help local, national and international decision-makers to better address challenges facing the region.

This report is one outcome of the project *Promoting broader and more informed dialogue on conflict, security and peace in Georgia*. Jointly implemented by the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association and Saferworld, this project is designed to develop the capacity of Georgian civil society to analyse, and play a constructive role in policy development on, issues related to conflict, security and peace. The process involves a two-way conversation between representative groups and wider society in the regions of Kvemo Kartli, Samegrelo, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Shida Kartli. It also involves regular meetings between representatives of these regions, to share outcomes from their respective analyses. The process has the following objectives:

1. to elicit information from community members about their perspectives on conflict issues
2. to provide more balanced and impartial information about conflict issues

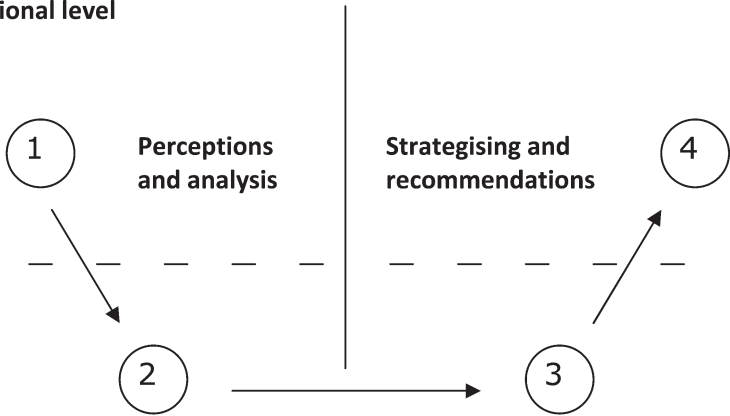
3. to stimulate people to think about these issues in new and wider ways
4. to share perspectives between community members in the different regions.

The overall process consists of four stages (see diagram below). The purpose of the first stage was to understand community perspectives on the causes and effects of the August 2008 war in the four target regions, and the differences between the perspectives held by people in these regions. The results of this stage are captured in the report ‘Community perceptions of the *causes* and *effects* of the August 2008 conflict in Kvemo Kartli, Samegrelo, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Shida Kartli’. The second stage focused on deeper analysis of challenges for peace, security and stability in each of the target regions, while the third stage focused on the development of strategies to respond to key region-specific challenges. This report is one of four summarising the region-specific results of stages two and three (the other three reports cover the remaining target regions). For the methodology used to analyse the challenges identified, and to develop corresponding ‘solution strategies’, please see the annex at the end of this report. The fourth and final stage is underway at the time of publication and involves representatives from all four regions working together to plan solutions to shared challenges at the national level.

The value of this process is that it promotes a deep and sustained dialogue among a consistent group of interlocutors, both within and between the four target regions. The strategies for peace, security and stability developed in this process for each of the four regions, and for the nation as a whole, will then serve as the basis for dialogue between Georgian civil society and decision-makers at the regional, national and international levels.

STAGES IN THE DISCUSSION PROCESS

National level



Regional level

1. Causes and effects of the August 2008 conflict
2. Analysis of region-specific challenges to peace, security and stability
3. Strategising solutions to key region-specific challenges
4. Strategising solutions to key shared / national challenges

Summary of the strategy

This strategy looks to identify the following key challenges for peace, security and stability in Samtskhe-Javakheti, as identified by communities:

1. Economic stagnation and reliance on other states, and Russia in particular.
2. Poor Georgian language skills of ethnic Armenians in the region.
3. The tendency to send young people to Armenia or Russia for higher education.

To address those challenges the representative group proposes the following:

Build a well developed economy in the region and improve livelihood through:

- Promoting entrepreneurship in the region.
- Development of agriculture, both in terms of production and processing.
- Exploitation of the region's natural resources.
- Effective development of tourism in the region.
- Reducing outward migration of ethnic Armenians and support for their return.
- Local residents benefit from Samtskhe-Javakheti becoming a hub for regional transit.

Increase fluency in Georgian among ethnic minorities in the region through:

- Reducing the sense of isolation (information-wise and psychological) among ethnic Armenians from the rest of the country.
- Assurance of the protection of Armenian culture.
- Increasing the quality of Georgian language teaching programmes at pre-school, secondary school and higher-education levels, as well as in alternative educational institutions (e.g. language houses).
- Increasing motivation for ethnic Armenians to learn Georgian.

Reduce the number of children being sent to Russia and Armenia for higher education through taking those same actions identified above to address the other two key challenges.

Challenges for peace, security and stability in Samtskhe-Javakheti

Community consultations conducted by the representative group in June 2010 revealed 12 region-specific challenges for peace, security and stability. Based on community views and feedback, the first three challenges below were identified as the most important, while the remaining nine were considered less pressing.

a) Key challenges

1. *Economic stagnation and reliance on other states, Russia in particular.* In spite of Government investment in connecting the region to the rest of Georgia (e.g. through a road building programme), the economic situation has not yet improved. The situation in fact worsened following the August 2008 war, due to the region's reliance on remittances from Russia. Growing unemployment and impoverishment are both leading to migration from the region and reinforcing perceptions of discrimination among ethnic Armenian communities.
2. *Poor Georgian language skills of ethnic Armenians in the region.* Despite attempts to improve the quality of Georgian language education available in Samtskhe-Javakheti, poor understanding of Georgian among ethnic Armenians remains an issue, especially for the older generation. This prevents them from reaching their full potential and hampers their integration into mainstream Georgia. In turn, this reinforces the region's sense of psychological and informational isolation from the rest of Georgia and reduces people's willingness to invest their future in the region or the country.
3. *The tendency to send children to Armenia or Russia for higher education.* There is a tendency among ethnic Armenians to send their children abroad for higher education, because of traditional affiliations (they have close friends, family members and there is no language barrier) and because of a perception that higher education institutions in Armenia and Russia are easier to access due to corruption there. This is leading to a 'brain drain' from the region, and

further reinforcing divisions between Georgians and ethnic Armenians – especially as those young people that do return from abroad feel further distanced from Georgia.

b) Other challenges

4. *The region's psychological and informational isolation from the rest of Georgia.* This isolation makes it harder for people from the region, especially from ethnic Armenian communities, to fully participate in the country's political and economic life.
5. *Fear of Government plans to alter the demographic and ethnic make-up of the region.* This fear is expressed in negative public attitudes towards 'newcomers', such as residents of other regions employed in local large-scale development and reconstruction projects. This fear partly explains public disapproval of the Government's plan to repatriate Muslim Meskhetians (Meskheti).
6. *Under-investment in the farming sector.* Vast areas of arable lands lie idle due to a lack of the necessary agricultural machinery with which to farm them. In general, there is a perception that little attention is paid to the needs of local farmers.
7. *Weak central government controls over local governance.* Local authorities are the main source of information for the central government about regional developments. As a result, local government representatives are subject to little external scrutiny and have significant influence in the region, while the region's residents feel that they have little say in the decision-making process at the local level.
8. *Low public participation in regional government.* Local residents display a lack of awareness of their civil rights. For example, they think that the head of the local municipality is not a public servant and that citizens are not allowed to request public information. This results in weak involvement and participation in local government, especially among minority communities, which in turn results in further estrangement from the State. This situation also causes discontent with the central government on the part of local residents, who do not distinguish between different levels of government.

9. *Ethnic and religious differences in the region.* Most ethnic Armenian and Georgian communities in the region live separately from one another in compact settlements, which makes disagreements and misunderstandings between them more likely. Such differences can be manipulated by ‘certain’ individuals for local political advantage, thereby escalating tensions.
10. *Falling incomes and growing poverty as a result of the decrease in remittances from Russia following the August 2008 war.* The Armenian community of Javakheti was hit hardest by the crisis, not least because remittances sent home by family members who had permanent or seasonal jobs in other countries (mostly in Russia) constituted more than 60% of the incomes of local families.
11. *Perception on the part of ethnic minorities that their rights are being violated.* Lack of awareness of the (often very similar) situation in other regions means that any decisions by local authorities or other public institutions that negatively affect minority communities are often perceived as a violation of their rights.
12. *Anxiety about the fate of relatives in Russia.* Due to worsened relations with Russia since the August 2008 war, many local residents have been unable to easily communicate with family members living and working in Russia. This leads to anxiety about their fate.

Key challenge 1: Economic stagnation and reliance on other states, and Russia in particular

a) Importance for local peace, security and stability

In spite of government investment in connecting the region to the rest of Georgia (e.g. through a road building programme), the economic situation has not yet improved, and in fact worsened following the August 2008 war as the region continues to rely on remittances from Russia. Growing unemployment and impoverishment are both leading to migration from the region and reinforcing perceptions of discrimination among ethnic Armenian communities.

b) Local impact (who suffers and how do they suffer)

- Growing unemployment and impoverishment of the region across all ethnic communities is perceived by Armenians as ethnic discrimination.
- Due to the lack of employment opportunities and the lack of optimism about the potential for improvement in the overall situation, a significant number of people are seeking to migrate from the region. The human resources base of the region is consequently decreasing – which could further reinforce economic stagnation.
- Because the visa regime with Russia has become more restrictive since the August 2008 war, ethnic Armenians now seek to migrate to Russia with their families on a permanent rather than a seasonal basis.

c) Driving factors (causes and actors)

- The regional economy was heavily reliant on the presence of the Russian military base. The business sector in the region has failed to adapt since the closure of the Russian base.
- State efforts to improve the economic situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti have not yet brought the desired results. This is predominantly because the programmes are still relatively new, state resources

are quite limited and stretched across other regions also needing support, and because the August 2008 war badly affected the overall economic situation in the country.

- Misdirected or inadequate government development policies and strategies for the region, including: a) an ineffective agricultural policy which relies primarily on investment by international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private entrepreneurs rather than state support and initiatives; b) the absence of a strategy to exploit natural resources in the region; and c) limited investment in infrastructure to support tourism.
- While national and international NGOs are trying to support the development of the region, low levels of donor funding mean that this support is not as effective as it could be.
- While seasonal labour migration to Russia is widespread across Georgia, it is especially prevalent among ethnic Armenians from the region. Following the August 2008 war, Russia imposed visa restrictions on Georgian citizens, meaning that the flow of remittances from seasonal labour has decreased.
- Due to the flow of qualified human resources away from Samtskhe-Javakheti, infrastructure projects tend to employ people from neighbouring countries or other regions of Georgia. Employment in the region is also highly dependent on nepotism based on clan relationships, rather than merit.
- The local population is doing little to improve their own situation. Many are wary of new technology and tend to spend any spare income on 'luxury' goods, rather than investing in their farms or businesses.

d) Recommendations

In order **to build a well developed economy in the region and improve livelihoods**, the representative group recommends the following:

1. *Promotion of entrepreneurship in the region:*
 - a) The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, supported by independent experts, conducts and publishes an in-depth study

of Samtskhe-Javahketi's economic development potential and the impact of establishing a Free Economic Zone in the region.

- b) Independent experts conduct a study on how to develop an effective credit scheme for the region, with donor support. This study should include a lessons-learned component analysing the successes and failures of previous schemes.
 - c) On the basis of findings from the credit scheme study, the Government and financing institutions set up mechanisms for financing the start-up of small businesses.
 - d) The Government and local and international NGOs increase support to business and farmers' associations. These efforts should be supported by donors as well as by relevant local organisations such as training providers and think tanks.
 - e) NGOs and business associations monitor any legislation and policies introduced to encourage entrepreneurship in the region, in order to ensure their proper implementation.
2. *Development of agriculture, both in terms of production and processing:*
- a) The local government, together with the Ministry of Agriculture, develops a regional strategy for agricultural development. Key elements of the plan should include the introduction of new farming technologies to modernise production techniques and investment in small-scale processing plants for local products.
 - b) The Ministry of Agriculture, in co-operation with the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, initiates an in-depth study of the region's land resources in order to complete land reform.
3. *Exploitation of the region's natural resources:*
- a) The Ministry of Environment, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, conducts a survey of the region's natural resources.
 - b) The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development conduct market research and develop

a strategy for how the region can best profit from its natural resources.

4. *Effective development of tourism in the region:*

- a) The Tourism Agency, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development develop a realistic plan for developing tourism infrastructure.
- b) The Tourism Agency, local government and local businesses run advertising campaigns on Samtskhe-Javakheti as a tourism destination.

5. *Reduced outward migration of ethnic Armenians and support for their return:*

- a) The Ministries of Education and Science, Regional Development and Infrastructure, Economy and Sustainable Development and Agriculture develop human resource development programmes for sectors of strategic economic importance in the region. These include business development and management, marketing, tourism and hospitality, natural resource management and extraction, and agricultural management.
- b) The same actors should invest in the region's existing vocational schools so that they have the capacity to support a regional human resources programme.
- c) The Office of the Minister of Reintegration and NGOs should develop a programme to support repatriation of migrants, including education programmes on local legislation and the general local context.

6. *Local residents benefit from Samtskhe-Javakheti becoming a hub for regional transit:*

- a) The Government and investors should ensure that local residents are employed to work on their infrastructure projects.

Key challenge 2: Poor Georgian language skills of ethnic Armenians in the region

a) Importance for local peace, security and stability

Despite attempts to improve the quality of Georgian language education available in Samtskhe-Javakheti, poor understanding of Georgian among ethnic Armenians remains an issue, especially for the older generation. This prevents them from reaching their full potential and hampers their integration into mainstream Georgia. In turn, this reinforces the region's sense of psychological and informational isolation from the rest of Georgia and reduces people's willingness to invest their future in the region or the country.

b) Local impact (who suffers and how do they suffer)

- Ethnic Armenians with poor Georgian language skills face challenges in pursuing higher education and employment opportunities within Georgia. Lack of a common language also inhibits communication with people from other regions of Georgia.
- As a result, many ethnic Armenians living in Samtskhe-Javakheti do not feel a strong sense of Georgian citizenship, or feel they are 'inferior' citizens.
- Poor Georgian language skills also have a very negative impact on the already fragile economy of Samtskhe-Javakheti, as there is a lack of highly skilled and experienced bilingual people to drive regional development.
- All of this reinforces the region's sense of psychological and informational isolation from the rest of Georgia.
- Isolation in turn reduces people's willingness to invest their future in the region. As a result, many young people are migrating to Armenia or Russia in search of higher education and employment opportunities.

c) Driving factors (causes and actors)

- Samtskhe-Javakheti has traditionally been isolated from the rest of Georgia, as poor infrastructure made travel to and from the rest of the country difficult. At the same time, in parts of the region the majority of the local population is ethnically Armenian and have closer family and trade links across the border with Armenia (which borders the region), than with the rest of Georgia.
- National initiatives to improve Georgian language skills are viewed with scepticism by some local residents (as well as the by the diaspora). There is a fear that they represent an attempt to ‘assimilate’ and ‘Georgianise’ ethnic Armenians living in Samtskhe-Javakheti.
- The Armenian and Georgian media feed these concerns by printing articles that are either extremely pro-Armenian or pro-Georgian, respectively. There are very few moderate articles about the situation in the region. It should be noted that due to the role of international NGOs in fostering integration, Georgian language programmes are no longer viewed with such suspicion.
- However, while many ethnic Armenian parents would like their children to learn Georgian, there is a perception that it is generally taught badly, with poor quality textbooks and a lack of properly qualified language teachers.

d) Recommendations

In order **increase fluency in Georgian among minority groups**, the representative group recommends the following:

1. *Reduced sense of isolation (information-wise and psychological) among ethnic Armenians from the rest of the country:*
 - a) The Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Sport and Youth as well as NGOs, universities and schools launch exchange programmes within the country (at both secondary and higher education levels).
 - b) The Ministry of Education and Science, donors, the Ministry of Sports and Youth and local governments organise summer camps for Georgian language learning and integration.

- c) Regional media outlets, supported by local government and NGOs, provide news from the entire country, as well as information on vacancies, tenders and business opportunities throughout the country.
2. *Assurance of the protection of ethnic Armenian culture:*
- a) The relevant government institutions as well as civil society should launch a programme to preserve and develop minority languages and culture through festivals and other cultural events and a history curriculum that uses textbooks jointly developed by Armenian and Georgian historians.
 - b) The Ministry of Education and Science introduces compulsory civic education in all schools to raise awareness of the Georgian State, including the constitution, human rights, and civil rights and responsibilities. This will help ethnic minorities feel more secure as citizens with equal rights.
 - c) The Ministry of Education and Science, with the support of local government and NGOs, trains teachers in teaching civic education in a way that promotes the integration of different ethnic groups.
3. *Increased quality of Georgian language teaching at pre-school, secondary school and higher-education levels, as well as in alternative educational institutions (e.g. language houses):*
- a) The Ministry of Education and Science provides teachers with additional training in how to teach Georgian as a second language.
 - b) Local government and the Ministry of Education and Science provide lessons in Georgian as a second language at the pre-school and secondary school levels, as well as language courses for adults – with a focus on the rural population.
 - c) Local and international NGOs develop adult vocational courses in Georgian, as well as producing supporting material such as dictionaries.
 - d) Local and international experts, in co-operation with local Georgian language teachers, should develop a new state programme

for teaching Georgian as a second language that addresses present gaps (including methodology, textbooks and other teaching resources). This could include intermediary level textbook and teaching materials, innovative and practical teaching methodologies and an approach specific to the region's context.

- e) The Ministry of Education and Science establishes a system for monitoring teaching standards. This could be undertaken by independent consultants and parents.

4. *Increased motivation for ethnic Armenians to learn Georgian:*

- a) Local government ensures comprehensive implementation of the Law on Public Service, in order to guarantee that state personnel are appointed on the basis of merit rather than relationships or political affiliation.
- b) Local civil society monitors the extent to which local government appointments respect the Law on Public Service.
- c) Donor organisations and national and international NGOs support local NGOs' capacity to research and advocate on equal access to employment.
- d) The local media and NGOs, with donor support, promote and popularise Georgian among ethnic minority groups, by covering stories about good relationships between ethnic Armenians and Georgians in the region, and thus promoting a shared sense of citizenship.
- e) The Ministry of Education and Science and NGOs monitor the progress of the first year of the Government's programme aimed at increasing opportunities for students from ethnic minorities to enter Georgian universities. Information about the scheme should be widely publicised.

Key challenge 3: The tendency to send young people to Armenia or Russia for higher education

a) Importance for local peace, security and stability

There is a tendency among ethnic Armenians to send their children abroad for higher education, because of traditional affiliations (they have close friends, family members and there is no language barrier) and because higher-education institutions in Armenia and Russia are easier to access due to corruption there. This is leading to a ‘brain drain’ from the region, and further reinforcing divisions between Georgians and ethnic Armenians – especially as those young people that do return from abroad feel further distanced from Georgia.

b) Local impact (who suffers and how do they suffer)

- As young people seek higher education and employment opportunities outside of Georgia, outward migration increases. Not only does this mean that families are divided, but also that there is a brain drain in Samtskhe-Javakheti and a lack of qualified human resources to help the region develop.
- There is a perception that the outward migration of young people is also contributing to the ‘ageing’ of the region’s population.
- Those young people who do return often hold pro-Armenian or pro-Russian views and correspondingly negative views about the Georgian State.

c) Driving factors (causes and actors)

- Although Georgian language is part of the curriculum in Armenian schools in Samtskhe-Javakheti, it is often taught very poorly due to low-quality teaching materials and a lack of properly qualified teaching staff. As a result, ethnic Armenian high-school graduates in Samtskhe-Javakheti have trouble speaking Georgian comfortably.
- The perception that there are few employment opportunities in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The business sector is not well developed in

the region, and there is a perception that employment in the state sector is based on nepotism rather than professionalism.

- The efforts of national and international NGOs to provide professional training and entrepreneurship courses are perceived as positive, but their impact on the overall economy of the region is weak.

d) Recommendations

In order **to reduce the number of young people being sent to Russia and Armenia for higher education**, the representative group recommends the same set of actions as those identified for key challenges 1 and 2, towards **building a well developed economy in the region and improving livelihoods** and **increasing state language skills among minority groups**.

Recently certain steps have been put in place by the government to address this challenge, including assigning quotas for the number of ethnic minority students to enter institutions of higher education. As mentioned above in recommendation 4e of key challenge 2, the representative group strongly urges the Ministry of Education and Science and NGOs to monitor this initiative in order to ensure its effective implementation and make any improvements necessary.

Annex: methodology for analysing problems and strategising solutions

For each identified key challenge the representative group worked through a process of first developing a more elaborated ‘problem statement’ to explain the challenge. On the basis of each problem statement, the group then developed a ‘solution strategy’ for how to resolve the challenge, which in turn provided the material for specific recommendations. At each stage in this process, the representative group consulted with a range of communities in their region, as well as with representatives from other regions.

Developing a ‘problem statement’

In order to develop a problem statement for a specific challenge, the representative group was facilitated to analyse (1) the driving factors behind the problem – that is *what* causes the problem and *who* is responsible, and (2) the impact of the problem – that is *who* suffers and *how* they suffer. Drawing on the identified impacts, the group was then asked to clearly articulate (3) why the issue is important for peace, security and stability in their region.

Turning a ‘problem statement’ into a ‘solution strategy’

Once the problem statement had been developed, the group was then asked to develop a corresponding ‘solution strategy’. To do this, they were first asked to identify (1) the overall change that they would like to see in relation to the challenge. They were then asked to identify the key things that need to happen in society to achieve this overall change. That is, to identify (2) the preconditions that need to be met, whether changes to policies, practices, attitudes or behaviours. The most difficult aspect of this part of the process was to make sure that the list did not become a long ‘shopping list’. As such, the group was encouraged to capture only those elements that are absolutely necessary, and without which the overall change could not happen. Finally, the group was asked to brainstorm (3) the steps or changes that are necessary in order to bring about each of these pre-conditions. Please see below for an example ‘solution strategy’ given to the group to assist their thinking.

Example solution strategy – for illustrative purposes only

1) Overall change wanted			
To create an enabling environment where marginalised women from conflict-affected communities can protect their rights and take an active part in decision-making			
2) Key preconditions that need to be met in order to achieve the overall change			
Women have increased confidence and desire to take part in political life	Women have increased and relevant skills to take part in political life	There are adequate laws to protect women's rights	There is public support for the inclusion of women in decision-making, public life, and for the protection of women's rights
3) Necessary steps to bring about the key preconditions			
↑ Women's successes receive as much recognition as those of men	↑ Women's access to development opportunities increases	↑ There is clear and widespread understanding of what women's rights are	↑ There are changes in the perception of the role of women in society
Women have a strong support network	There is an environment in which women can play multiple roles	Civil society is organized and is pushing for greater protection of women's rights	
Women feel an active demand for their input	Women are aware of appropriate career paths for political life	There are champions of women's rights in the political system	
Women see the results of their activities	Culture of politics and public life allows for skills to develop	There is a base of information on the social benefits of women's participation	
Political culture becomes less macho.			

Developing recommendations from the ‘solution strategy’

The group was then asked to draw recommendations from the solution strategy by (1) reformulating each precondition as a key issue that needs to be resolved, and (2) reformulating each step as a precise recommendation of *what* needs to be done and *who* is responsible for the change. Please see below for example recommendations provided to the group to assist their thinking.

Example recommendations – for illustrative purposes only

1) Key issue to be resolved

Enhance the confidence and desire of women to take part in political life

3) Specific recommendations

↑
That the Georgian media increase their coverage of women's involvement in community and public life, highlighting the contributions that women are making to Georgian society.
That national and international NGOs support women to play an active role in politics, by providing relevant training, encouragement and mobilizing women around opportunities for advocacy;
That all political parties, international organizations and NGOs actively seek the input of women when they are formulating new policies
That all political parties actively recruit women as members and examine their working culture and practices to ensure that they are gender sensitive.

This report is based on the consultations, analysis and strategising conducted by the following group members in Samtskhe-Javakheti, and has been validated by them:

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The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)

The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) is a public policy think-tank specialising in the broad area of democracy development. CIPDD was founded in 1992 in Tbilisi, Georgia. It is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation. It advocates policy goals such as the development of a vibrant and diverse civil society, effective and accountable public institutions based on the rule of law and an integrated political community, one which at the same time respects and preserves the identities of different ethnic and religious communities. CIPDD's main activities include public policy research and publishing and disseminating its results, and organising different forms of debate – professional, political or public – about this work.



The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting human rights and the rule of law. We adhere to the Constitution of Georgia, legislation and our Statute on the whole territory of Georgia. GYLA is a membership-based organisation.

Goals of GYLA:

- Promote the rule of law;
- Protect human rights and freedoms;
- Increase public legal awareness;
- Promote norms of professional ethics among lawyers;
- Develop the skills and competence of lawyers;
- Develop the legislative basis for civil society and the rule of law in the country.



Saferworld

Saferworld works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote co-operative approaches to security. We work with governments, international organisations and civil society to encourage and support effective policies and practises through advocacy, research and policy development and through supporting the actions of others.

Peace, security and stability in Samtskhe-Javakheti – a community-informed strategy

According to local communities, the following challenges have to be met to ensure peace, security and stability in the region:

Build a well developed economy in the region and improve livelihoods. In spite of Government investment, the economic situation has not yet improved. The situation in fact worsened following the August 2008 war, due to the region's reliance on remittances from Russia. Growing unemployment and impoverishment are both leading to migration from the region and reinforcing perceptions of discrimination among ethnic Armenian communities

Increase fluency in Georgian among ethnic minorities in the region. Poor understanding of Georgian among ethnic Armenians prevents them from reaching their full potential and hampers their integration into mainstream Georgia. This in turn reinforces the region's sense of psychological and informational isolation from the rest of Georgia, and reduces people's willingness to invest their future in the region.

Reduce the number of children being sent to Russia and Armenia for higher education. There is a tendency among ethnic Armenians to send their children abroad for higher education. This is leading to a 'brain drain' from the region, and further reinforcing divisions between Georgians and Armenians – especially as those young people that do return from abroad feel further distanced from Georgia.

Detailed recommendations for how to address each challenge are included in this report.

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